

EXAMINING BRAC CLOSURES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the subject of the Base Realignment and Closure process that is currently ongoing. I speak as a former Air Force pilot and a member of Congress from New Mexico. Although the base that I would like to talk about does not lie in my district, I think the overall concern that I have is that the process of establishing military value has somehow been deeply flawed, at least with respect to this one base. I would like to mention a couple of things about it.

According to the criteria set up by the BRAC Commission, encroachment was supposed to be one of the important issues that was discussed. In other words, if a town grows around a military base, it somehow loses its value because there are certain processes that are not as capable of being performed. So encroachment, that is the growing of the population around the base, is an extremely important measurement as we determine military value.

But as we look at the population, the population is listed on this chart in red. In the white areas are low population density areas. Cannon Air Force base is right here about 4 or 5 miles from the Texas border on the east side of New Mexico. As you can see, there are almost no population centers anywhere around. What this means is that Air Force fighters can take off from Cannon Air Force base without flying over densely populated areas. They can carry live munitions, live bombs, and live armament over this sparsely populated area without much risk.

Now this last week we saw the Harrier jet that actually had problems and fell into a housing area with those munitions on board, and that is the problem with encroachment. And yet when the BRAC Commission says that we should not have encroachment and that will be a high priority, we see that no encroachment has occurred here. And as we look across the rest of the country, we see deep encroachment occurring; and so one criteria appears to be completely ignored with respect to Cannon Air Force base in the eastern side of New Mexico.

Another one of the criteria that was mentioned is training space unencumbered by the overflight of airlines and commercial traffic. Now, again, if people are not aware of the White Sands Missile Range that lies in the second district of New Mexico which I do respect, that is a completely restricted air space. No airliner ever flies through that air space. And so starting back across Dallas, one can see from this chart that almost no white exists, white would be the commercial air traffic. But those flights begin to divert north toward Albuquerque, or they divert south to El

Paso and fly completely around New Mexico.

Now, Cannon Air Force Base again lies about the midpoint in New Mexico along the New Mexico-Texas border, and it benefits because those airliners have already begun to divert far before they hit the New Mexico border, and so the air space that is available for training lies in this particular area. And, again, one of the extreme criteria of the BRAC Commission appears to have been either ignored or just disregarded.

The problem of training space becomes even more important when it is considered with population density. Many times aircraft that take off from densely populated areas have to fly to areas of sparse population, and each flight in a military aircraft can run tens of thousands of dollars. It might be as much as \$50,000 an hour to operate. So each hour to convey the aircraft simply to the training zone is extremely expensive both in dollars and also in the use of the hours on the military aircraft, each aircraft having a certain limited life in terms of flight hours. So, again, one of the criteria seems to be omitted.

Another criterion that was judged to be important in evaluating which bases to keep open or closed were weather on the training days. Again, green indicates the days of cloudy weather. The white areas are generally clear skies. I can tell you, having flown in New Mexico most of my life, approximately 320 days a year are available for flight training in New Mexico, and it is significantly less. The next chart I show is simply a followup on that, and it shows precipitation. Again, one can see that the area around Cannon Air Force Base simply does not have the problem of precipitation.

Again, precipitation is two problems. It is a problem of flying in bad and inclement weather, and it is also the problem of corrosion, and we do not have the problem on or in New Mexico. Again, it is a very significant thing.

The final chart, Mr. Speaker, wraps it all up. New Mexico has the best, most accessible training space, the least encroachment, and the least overflight of commercial traffic. We are not able to understand exactly how the BRAC Commission came up with its report. And we would urge the House to take a stand to see that military value is considered as we approach the approval of the BRAC process.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EMANUEL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

OUT OF IRAQ CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I come this evening to further announce to the people of this Nation that we have formed an Out of Iraq Caucus here in the Congress of the United States of America.

There has been quite a bit of debate this weekend about the activities that took place here in Congress. There was a lot of discussion this weekend about the hearing that was held right here in the basement of the Capitol headed by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) in conjunction with a group that is now known as AfterDowningStreet.org. And that hearing helped to give exposure to the famous, now famous, infamous memorandum that basically some see as a smoking gun, discussing who knew what, when did they know it, and what did they plan to do.

In essence, it is easy to conclude reading that memorandum that this administration, the President of the United States of America and others, had decided that they were going into Iraq, that they were going to attack Saddam Hussein long before 9/11. So that hearing took place, and it was a very interesting one.

It was a very revealing one and over 30 Members of Congress joined in the basement in this crowded room. And I have had a lot of questions this weekend about why were we jammed into such a small room, and I had to answer truthfully and let the people who asked the question know that the Republicans are in charge. They are able to determine where we meet, if we can meet, what kind of space we will have. And they have said to us, they are going to stop allowing us to use any committee rooms. And so even though it was a very small room, it was all that we could get. But, of course, those who have the power can choose to use it responsibly or irresponsibly.

And I would say to the people of this country at this time that we will be thwarted in our efforts to get the word out, to have this kind of discussion; but we will persist, we will not give up.

Further, aside from that hearing, we did form the Out of Iraq Caucus. Over 60 Members have now signed up. And I am being asked by journalists and TV personalities, what happened? Why are you having this discussion and this debate that is occurring at this time?

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I must answer those questions by saying, first of all, we have Members of Congress who were elected by their constituents on peace, justice and equality issue. We have Members of Congress who have long histories fighting and agitating for peace. Whether you talk about the Vietnam War or the work that many of us did to end apartheid in South Africa or the work that we are doing now to try to bring attention to genocide in Sudan, this is who we are. This is what we do.

Philosophically, we cannot sit here and allow this war to continue with no

exit strategy, no answers, no reports from the President of the United States about how they are really going to get the training done, what does that mean and basically when are we going to bring our troops home.

So we have joined with the American public. The American public have been waiting on us. They are against this war. The polls now are showing us that the American public wants this war to end, and so we have joined with them to provide some leadership.

Our caucus is made up of an array of Democrats, some who come from the New Democrats, some from the Blue Dog Democrats, some from the Progressive Democrats, but we have come together to talk about coordinating activities, helping to give a platform to this discussion, to work with the national peace organizations, to bring in people who have been trying to get to Congress but since we have no hearings that are going on, they have not been able to connect with anybody. We are going to connect with them, whether they are veterans against this war or mothers and fathers and family members who have had their children and relatives killed in this war. They are now going to have Members to talk to.

We are going to create this discussion and this debate, and some people are saying out now. Some people are saying, Mr. President, give us a strategy. Some people are trying to come up with a date certain.

We have a bipartisan effort that has been put together with a date certain attached to it. As far as our caucus is concerned, people see it a little bit differently, whether or not out now, whether or not we just beg the President to give us a strategy or whether or not we insist on a date certain. The most important thing is we are all organized just to get the word out. We want out of Iraq.

This thing will evolve, and as it evolves, we will know what the right timing is. The President will have an opportunity now, given that he has seen the polls and he understands what is going on, he can denounce it or reject it in any way that he wants, but the fact of the matter is the people of this country want us out. The new caucus that I am so proud of that we have formed will work to make sure that we have the debate that we have not had.

CAFTA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARCHANT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I have listened to my colleagues with great interest tonight.

Three issues seem to have been raised. One is on CAFTA, which I will address tonight, and then we talked about Guantanamo, which I am going to try to address later this week. Then we will talk about Iraq because there

are parallels between what we are seeing in Iraq right now and what happened in World War I and World War II, but I cannot cover all those tonight. So I will debate my colleagues on some of those other issues later this week.

Let me talk about CAFTA right now because the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR), my good friend, for whom I have the highest regard, was just talking about some of the problems that occur with women in Central and South America and the living conditions and the working conditions, and I agree with her.

Because of that, and a number of other reasons, I voted against NAFTA and worked with my colleague on that, and I voted against the WTO and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. So you probably ask, well, why in the world, Danny, would you be in favor of CAFTA if you opposed all those others? So I want to tell my colleagues tonight why I support CAFTA.

First of all, we have what is known as the Caribbean Basin Initiative, and the Caribbean Basin Initiative is kind of a one-way street right now. We allow the Caribbean countries and Central American countries to export into the United States without tariffs while at the same time, when we send stuff into those countries, we do have to pay tariffs in many cases. So the bottom line is it is a one-way street.

The Caribbean Basin Initiative will go by the wayside if we pass CAFTA, and we will have a two-way street where there will be minimal tariffs or no tariffs whatsoever, and so our producers will benefit the same as the producers in Central America and the Caribbean. I think that is one reason why I think CAFTA is a better deal than what we see with the Caribbean Basin Initiative.

The second thing is that we need to see stability in Central and South America. President Reagan, when he was President, worked very hard to create democracy in our hemisphere, and as a result of the Reagan doctrine, all of the countries in Central and South America became fledgling democracies over the past few decades with the exception of Cuba. We are starting to see cracks in those democracies because of the poverty down there and because of some leftist leaders. We see problems in four or five, six countries in Central and South America right now, and one of the things that we need to do is to address the issue of poverty down there.

One way to do that is to try to see some foreign investment going in there from places besides China and Europe into Central and South America so that we see a reduction in the poverty rate and a reduction in the pressure that is being brought about on the existing democracies down there to move toward leftist governments.

If we have a change, a sea change in those countries in Central and South America, then what is going to happen is the illegal immigration problems

that we see right now will be magnified. They will grow because people want to flee tyranny. They want to flee conflict, and if you start seeing revolutionary activity take place, like that which we saw in El Salvador in the 1980s, and in Nicaragua in the 1980s and elsewhere, then you are going to see people saying, I am getting the heck out of here; I am going north; I am going to the United States. Our border is very porous. We have a terrible time controlling it right now. We have millions of people that have come across that border that are now in the United States that cost our taxpayers money and cause a lot of hardship and problems.

So stabilizing those governments in Central and South America I think is extremely important. I am now the chairman of the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere on the Committee on International Relations, and I have had a chance, along with my colleague the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) to start looking at this issue. We may not agree on this, but I think it is important that we go down there and look at these countries and find out how we can make sure there are stable governments in place and that we do not see democracies start to deteriorate and go by the wayside.

So I feel it is very important that we look at this from more than just one point of view. Trade is important. Job loss by Americans is very important. I am concerned about both of those things. A two-way street in trade with no tariffs I think is also very important, but also one of the major issues as far as I am concerned is the stabilization of democracy in our hemisphere. If we do not, as a leader of democratic institutions in this hemisphere and around the world, take the initiative to stabilize those countries, who in the heck will?

So I still believe in free and fair trade. I would not vote for NAFTA today. I would not vote for GATT today. I would not vote for the WTO today, but I am going to vote for CAFTA, and the reason I am voting for CAFTA is for the reason I just said. I think it is extremely important to not only worry about trade and balance but also about national security and immigration, and I hope my colleagues at least understand where I stand on this issue because I love you guys.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. STRICKLAND addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.